

ROTTNEST ISLAND, TASK FORCE

**1311. Mr R.F. JOHNSON to the Minister for Tourism:**

I refer the minister to the announcement of yet another government task force - bringing the long list of reviews, task forces and committees to around 300 - this time to look at the run-down and degraded services on Rottnest Island.

- (1) Will this task force examine the impact on services of cuts to the Rottnest Island Authority capital works budget of \$1.89 million in this Government's first two budgets?
- (2) Given that the 132-page Rottnest Island management plan was released eight months ago with 249 detailed recommendations, including proposed upgrades to the infrastructure and utilities on the island, why has the Government set up a new task force rather than simply acting on the existing plan?

**Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:**

(1)-(2) The simple answer is that what is being done on the island is not working.

Mr R.F. Johnson: You are doing nothing. That is why.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: This Government wants to make sure that it is the first Government on record to actually make the island sustainable. It is as simple as that. The task force will be expected to report to me, but not on what needs to be done. I refer the Opposition to the Easton report of 1996, which requested the then Court Government to spend \$66 million on the island. It did nothing.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.C. KUCERA: In fact, the best of that Government's plans actually fell apart when the sewerage plant failed in 1996 and had to be replaced. How did that Government replace it? By getting the island to borrow \$4.7 million, which it is still trying to pay off. That Government not only sold off everything, but also caused everything that was left to go into debt. Opposition members now have the gall to ask this Government negative questions. For the very first time a Government is looking at dealing with the island on a sustainable basis and it is treating it in exactly the same way as it treats every other community in Western Australia. For the very first time a Government has started to look at things properly, and we get this sort of nonsense. There were no cuts. The \$14 million allocated during the four years of the present Government was committed for the kinds of things on which it is now being spent. I refer the member for Hillarys to the coalition's 2000-01 budget figures, which clearly show that the present Government has merely continued with the same kind of premise followed by the previous Government. It was allotting the same amount of money as the present Government. It was predicted that \$1.655 million allocated in the first year and \$1.5 million in the second year of the previous Government's budget would come from the allocation to the Rottnest Island Authority. The reality is that because the authority now has to cope with the level of debt it was left by the previous Government, it is not able to put in that contribution. The Government has already committed \$8 million over its four-year term, and much of that has already been spent. We all know what needs to be done. We all know that the water pipes were put down in 1930 by the Army, and that some of the houses were built 150 years ago. The task force will not be saying what needs to be done, but will be producing a sensible, balanced business plan that will return the island to where it needs to be as a holiday island. I will not apologise for setting up a group that will show us how Rottnest can retain its iconic status. I table the previous Government's budget figures.

[See paper No 1813.]